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AUTHOR Reaves, Shiela
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A study examined magazine editors' views of some of the ethical considerations posed by digital alteration of photographs. Subjects, 12 consumer news and specialty magazine editors, were interviewed by telephone and asked a series of questions concerning the ethics of digitally manipulating photographs. Results indicated that magazine editors were unanimous in refusing to alter news photos; however, news editors did not consider that digitally cloning backgrounds to fit a layout or cover was substantial alteration. Results also indicated that the editors were split in their initial reaction to the ethics of altering a feature photo. Findings suggest that the editorial formula of a magazine might dictate how far editors could digitally manipulate cover photos. (Sixty-five notes are included.) (RS)

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Digital Alteration of Photographs in Magazines: An Examination of the Ethics

by Shiela Reaves
Assistant Professor
University of Wisconsin–Madison
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Digital Alteration of Photographs in Magazines: An Examination of the Ethics

Until the 1980s magazine editors used photographs in much the same way that newspapers and photojournalists had for the past 100 years. The photograph was a document you could hold in your hand, crop and reproduce via the halftone process.However new technology is changing picture editing, and magazine editors may be confronting ethical questions that are distinct from their counterparts in newspapers. This brave new world of digital editing might reinforce the underlying differences in newspaper and magazine editing. These differences arise from the use and manipulation of photographs in magazines and magazine covers.

These new ethical questions are based on the ease and power of computers now used by large magazines and newspapers that invest in prepress computers with price tags of $2 million. Large magazines have paid the price for these powerful computers, with brand names like Scitex and Cromacom, because the new technology ensures flawless color reproduction on tight deadlines. This new technology is valuable for helping editors and photographers meet hair–raising deadlines while controlling color quality in printing plants across the country. In fact a new jargon word is being born —"to Scitex a photo"— which refers to the most popular name–brand computer from Israel

(other leading brands are Crosfield and Hell Graphics Cromacom).

In the last five years the computer revolution in photography has changed the traditional notions of film and the photograph.These prepress computers turn photographs into a series digital units called "pixels," which stand for picture elements. Computer pixels are smaller than film grain, and because pixels are computer data, they can be easily and quickly altered: you can duplicate, color and move pixels. The spontaneous ease of manipulating and combining photographs is now seamless — and undetectable.

Methodology

When does manipulating pixels become unethical? Some magazine editors are finding out by trial and error. Digitized photography is starting to redefine how editors and photographers shoot, edit and produce photographic images. The new issues are complex and range from the legalities of copy right protection to ethics.

This paper will examine some of the ethical considerations in magazine editing. It purports to ask only initial ethical questions and to begin a dialogue where editors from the diverse arena of consumer magazines can start to confront some of their feelings about how, when and why they might use this new technology to alter photographs. This paper will examine consumer magazines, as opposed to the trade magazines, because this technology is still relatively new and very expensive. The large consumer magazines have the incentives to use the new technology. Consumer magazines also reach more people with their use or misuse of digitized photos and therefore have a greater chance of shaping a dialogue on ethics.

Although newspaper editors have confronted some of these questions, there has been no study of magazine editors and their use of digital manipulation of photographs.[1] Many of the ethical questions facing newspaper editors can be directly applied to magazine editors. But there are enough differences between magazines and newspapers to require a separate examination of ethical considerations for consumer magazine editors. The questions of picture use by magazines are shaped by three differences between magazines and newspapers:

1. Magazines are distinct from newspapers in their diversity and editorial purpose. While newspapers are aimed almost exclusively at the general public, magazines most often appeal to highly specialized audiences. Magazine categories are robust and range from automobiles to yoga,

from large and small trade magazines to the glossy giants of consumer magazines. These diverse needs affect picture editing and the kinds of photos required.

2. Consumer magazines have stiffer competition on the newsstand than newspapers. As Meredith Corporation president James Autry observed, "Today there are 16,000 magazines in the United States, with 3,100 in the consumer category. And you wonder why the newsstands and the mail are crowded."[2] This competition requires near flawless cover photographs and this competition affects picture editing decisions.

3. Consumer magazines live and die by their covers; newspapers generally do not. The competition is so fierce that magazines have about three to five seconds to attract the potential buyer on the newsstand. The "guru of covers" at *Time* magazine, special projects director Richard Stolley, told the *Washington Journalism Review*, "Packaging is the thing that sells your magazine, no matter how it's sold. What's on the cover is the determining factor on whether people are going to find out what's inside the magazine."[3] Single–copy sales become more critical for new magazines trying to build an audience. Magazines rely more on photographs to attract the reader than do newspapers that can rely on banner headlines, breaking stories and sports scores.

The magazines in this study are divided into two groups: 1) a sampling of news editorial magazines such as the news weeklies and monthly documentary photography magazines that use photojournalism; 2) a sampling of consumer magazines whose main goals are not to report news, but rather to reach a special reader in magazines categories like shelter books or the travel field.

The news editorial magazines are closest in scope and goals of newspaper editors. Since both report news events, it is a plausible hypothesis that the news editorial magazines will have the same ethical concerns of newspaper editors. In contrast, a sampling of specialized magazines might draw out other considerations and also reflect the robust diversity of the magazine field.

With this in mind, five magazines were interviewed in each group: 1) News Editorial: *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, *Life*, which all have a reputation for photojournalism; 2) Specialized: Meredith Corporation (*Better Homes & Garden*, *Metropolitan Home*), *People Weekly*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Spy*, *Sports Illustrated for Kids*.

Review of Literature

A study of newspaper editors and their ethical concerns about the new technology found that

there was agreement that newspapers would never digitally manipulate news photographs; but there was some disagreement about feature–section photography. "I can see it being useful and OK if used on the art and entertainment pages or photo illustrations," said one newspaper editor. The study was confined only to newspaper photojournalism and ignored magazines because of the varied audiences, graphic design needs and deadline pressures. [4]

In a special publication by the National Press Photographers Association, *The Electronic Revolution in News Photography*, pointed to several magazines as transgressors of manipulating photos for better covers. "Certainly many of our less ethical publications are going to use the new tools to create 'rabbit faced children with 12 ears.' That has the potential to effect our credibility but not nearly as much as when publications like *National Geographic, Rolling Stone* and others are alternating photographs to meet editorial and layout needs," wrote editor Michael Morse in a call for ethical standards.5

Former director of photography for *National Geographic,* Robert Gilka, discussed image manipulation on magazine and book covers:

> We can go on the old saying that what out readers don't know won't hurt them. Yes, we can, but in the end isn't this going to destroy the integrity of photography as we know it? After all, almost everybody believes what he or she sees in a photograph.6

Robert Gilka had first–hand experience with the dilemma caused by editors altering a cover photograph. *National Geographic* raised eyebrows when it moved an Egyptian pyramid to fit the cover of its February 1982 issue. Moving a pyramid has since become photography's new metaphor for the potential abuses of digitized photographs. Since then other magazines have been noted for manipulating photos, such as *Rolling Stone* whose anti–handgun sentiments inspired editors to remove Miami Vice star Don Johnson's holster and gun from its cover.

Book covers have been doctored to sell documentary photography. The documentary series of Collins Publications have digitized several book covers: *A Day in the Life of America* showed a cowboy riding under the moon — except the moon was enlarged and the cowboy was moved closer; *A Day in the Life of Canada* showed two children standing on grass — except the original lawn was covered by dandelions; *A Day in the Life of California* shows a surfer but the original surf board was tilted and cut off at the top. "The cover sells the book," said a spokesperson for Collins Publishers to the *Wall Street Journal.* "You want people to stop and notice. I wouldn't say any of us

feel particularly great about doing it, but it seems to be a technology that others use."[7]

Many magazine editors are unaware of the ethical issues because they are unaware of the technology. *Folio Magazine* noted that "As editors become more aware of digital capability, image altering will play an increasingly important role in magazine publishing." Hal Buell, assistant general manager for news at the Associated Press told *Folio,* "With digital manipulation, you literally create a new picture that cannot be proved or disproved as authentic. The ease of manipulation makes the digital problem more complicated."8

Another complication might be the sometimes conflicting approaches of art and journalism. A letter to the editors of *MacWeek* magazine was concerned about an article on retouching photos with the Macintosh computer. "Your story and 'retouched' photograph may have inadvertently added further confusion in an age when the public regards reporting (in both words and pictures) with increased skepticism," wrote three visual editors from the *Sacramento Bee.* The lead author, George Wedding, has held national conferences on digital photography. "Newspapers are also establishing policies as this technology becomes available, stating that it will remain in the hands of photographers, lab technicians and picture editors — *and not page designers, section editors, artists or art directors.*"[9] (emphasis added) Magazines have traditionally relied on the creative talents of artists who might not have a grounding in news editorial concerns.

Traditional Manipulation and New Questions

Manipulating photographs has been used by artists and news publications for decades; it is almost as old as photography itself. The most common means has been cutting and pasting photos to create an entirely new image or else removing parts of a photo such as airbrushing. However until the 1980s the mechanical means of manipulating photographs had essentially not changed for over a 100 years: you usually needed to work with a photographer in a darkroom and you needed film or good prints. It took time and photographic skill.

Users of this new technology are limited only by their imagination and budgets. A prepress operator does not need to understand photography to create new pictures. Whoever has access to the computers has access to making changes; a darkroom is not involved. The changes appear instantly on the computer screen; there is no delay in processing films. The pixel is smaller and more efficient than film; the pixel can blend photos seamlessly together (theoretically a prepress system

could produce B&W negatives to "prove" the authenticity of a manipulated B&W photo).

Twelve magazine editors were interviewed by phone and asked the following questions: What are the distinctions you make in changing photos? What gray areas do you see? Are cover photos treated differently? Would you alter the following types of photos: news, feature, illustration, portraits or scenics.

News photos and the News Editorial Magazines

All 13 magazine editors and directors emphatically said that they would never digitally manipulate a news photograph. New technology is used for color correction or technical cleanup of shadows and highlights similar to the traditional process of burning and dodging a print.

"There is never an instance where it is morally justifiable to alter a news photo," said Tom Bentkowski, director of design for *Life* magazine. "There's a grave responsibility to the reader. We should put out magazines that readers should never have to question. I think there is zero tolerance for making photos that never existed."[10]

"Photography in a magazine is given some license to be more emotional and to address issues that aren't specifically facts," said Steve Larson, director of photography for *U.S. News & World Report*. "The assumption of the reader is that it actually happened. We lose that license to range in that emotional area if we're changing photos."[11]

"Hire the best photographers and have them create it on film," advised Nanette Bisher, senior art director at *U.S. News & World Report*. Bisher pointed out one of the luxuries in magazine photography was that editors had access to the world's best photographers. Coming from the *Orange County Register,* winner of the Pulitzer Prize in photography, Bisher said that the same standards of newspapers applied to *U.S. News & World Report*. "Photos remain in a rectangle — we don't mortise, we don't silhouette and we infrequently put letters over photos." Prepress computers are used to get the best color separations for the three different printing sites.[12]

Cloning and Extending Backgrounds, Sky or Tones

However there was somewhat of a consensus about what constituted "cleaning up" a photo for magazines: removing indistinguishable "blobs;" extending the sky or a background tone so a news photo could fit the layout.

"I think it's an area of debate," said Steve Larson of *U.S. News & World Report*. "I'm real

squeamish about it, but it's been done." Larson was uncomfortable when the background of a photo was generated so type could be added to fit the layout. [13]

"It's OK," said Tom Bentkowski of *Life*. "However, I do ponder that very, very carefully before I do it."[14] Michele Stephenson, picture editor of *Time*, agreed and noted that it was considered part of cropping people out of a picture. "You crop a picture and there's a corner of an elbow and somebody says 'we'd better take that out — it looks funny' — we do that sort of thing. I think everybody does that. I think you just have to be careful," said Stephenson.[15]

"I don't have any problem with it if it's just an inane thing like straightening a background and thus you lose a small corner and (need) to extend the sky background," said Dave Griffin, the *National Geographic* layout editor. Griffin, formerly the award–winning art director of *Philadelphia Inquirer's Sunday Magazine,* says he is conservative about cleaning photos but he will remove indistinguishable blobs. "Is it a black blur or a bird? Take it out. By the time it reproduces no one will know what it is — it might look more like a printing mistake." However Griffin refuses to digitally stretch a photo to fit the layout, even if it were as small a 1/32 of an inch. "I said 'no.' I would prefer to clone part of the picture or re–size. How far is too much stretching? How far is too much manipulation?"[16]

"We might extend the sky but we would never add stars," said Karen Mullarkey, picture editor of *Newsweek*, in a statement to her assistant Audrey Isaac.[17]

News Weeklies have been Accused of Alteration

It's not uncommon to hear accusations that the news weeklies have done significant retouching. "We do not alter photographs. We have been accused of it, but we do not," said Michele Stephenson of *Time*. "People say 'Oh, you take people out of pictures, you move people closer together. We do not." One *Time* magazine cover was accused of removing a crowd of people in a news photo when in fact the photographer was able to capture a different view. The Dec. 19, 1988 cover of *Time* showed the meeting between Reagan, Gorbachev, Bush and an interpreter.

"We were accused of taking the crowd out to the picture. Well that's absolutely not the case. We did nothing to that picture," said Stephenson. "This is a view where the photographer crouched down and shot up at them and you see a couple of people the background but only a couple." Stephenson said they did extend the sky so the logo could fit on the photograph.[18]

The Editorial Philosophy of Magazines Affects How Magazines Alter Photographs

While the news editorial magazines agreed that it was best to be conservative in altering photos, they acknowledged a difference in specialized magazines. "I think according to the kind of magazine or newspaper you have, it's important to establish the ground rules and establish what you want to represent.," said Michele Stephenson of *Time*.[19] "I guess if they (the readers) can accept that particular use of visual imagery and recognize that in a different vein of magazine that is totally geared to, let's say entertainment, they may doing things to make (photos) amusing — then that's OK," said Tom Kennedy, director of photography for *National Geographic*.[20]

"The editors need to set the parameters for themselves," said Tom Bentkowski of *Life*, however he was hesitant about too much alteration except for "wildly exaggerated" illustrations. "I'm more comfortable if it's absolutely clear that it's a fantasy."[21]

"It's very important for people on the staff to have a conversation to agree on basic ground rules" said Stephenson. "I know here where our art director and managing editor stand. And we've had discussions about this and we all feel very strongly. As long as you have those ground rules and you discuss those incidents as they come up. The whole key is to keep talking about it and to stay aware about the possibilities and the problems and to tackle them as they come up."[22]

Many of the editors of specialized magazines agreed that editorial philosophy could affect digital manipulation. The director of production at Meredith Corporation told a group of magazine educators, "I don't consider a photograph to be a photograph any more. It's something to work with." At *Better Homes & Garden*, where Bob Furstenau was art director from 1984 to 1988, he estimated that 45 of the 48 covers he worked on were digitally manipulated.[23]

"News magazines are dealing in reality and we're dealing in dreams — wish books I think are what *HG* and *Better Homes & Garden* are," said Bob Furstenau. "I wish I had a house like that; I wish I had a chair like that; I wish I had a dress like that."[24]

"We are illustrating ideas in our magazine most of the time," said Furstenau. "Our philosophy is of husbands and wives who are interested in home and family and who will take some sort of action. Our magazines are motivators and they are idea generators. They are not reportage even though we shoot people's homes."

"If your tagline is dedicated to the art of style, then I think you can do just about anything," said

Diana La Guardia, art director of *Conde Nast Traveler*. "This whole Scitex equipment is style. But if your tagline is like a news weekly's — then it's "we tell it like it is." La Guardia was formerly art director at the *New York Times Magazine* where she said editors were extremely conservative about changing photos. "I think you have to be really cautious on a weekly. You owe it to the reader to deliver that product on all levels, not just the reporting and the writing."[25]

The Demands of Cover Photographs

Karen Mullarkey expressed the demands of cover photography to her assistant Audrey Isaac. "The cover photo must make an impact, be very clean and instantly convey a message." She added that *Newsweek* does not alter cover photographs except to extend tones so type can fit "Be careful never to change the spirit."[26]

Can these cover demands land magazines in trouble? Pyramids that did not fit the cover format at *National Geographic* in 1982 inspired the editors to move one of the pyramids at Giza closer to the left. "I think that basically because of the pyramid experience and feedback that we got from that, we'd be very loathe even in respect to covers to use it (Scitex) in a way to substantially alter details in a photograph," said Tom Kennedy of *National Geographic*.[27]

"I prefer to look for pictures that will work with cropping," said Dave Griffin of *National Geographic*. "I feel that's my responsibility to find a picture that works and not find a picture that you love and then make it fit the format. You've got to take the format into consideration when you pick the picture."[28]

People Weekly uses digital photography only on their covers but it is used only for removing facial blemishes or dropping out backgrounds, according to picture editors M.C. Marden. "You buy the cover — it's certainly got to grab the reader. But we shoot a lot of our covers in the studio and the flaws aren't there because of the lighting."[29]

The former art director of the *New York Times Magazine*, Diana La Guardia, had a different perspective of magazine covers after she became art director for *Conde Nast Traveler*. "I come from a background were, let's say there was a shadow and you could drop the copy out but you weren't even allowed to darken the shadow (digitally). Then I jump into a world of glossy magazines and one that is brand new — and you're trying to sell like crazy, trying to sell on the newsstands," said La Guardia. "I find myself doing things that I would have never thought I would do."

La Guardia pointed out that monthly magazines are held to a higher standard of quality on their

covers than weeklies, that there is "a certain drive to be perfect." "When you do the monthly magazine you need a cover more like a point of purchase item, like a one–time shot that might catch the eye of a passerby who might not have been interested last month," said La Guardia. "It's more like a one shot and the emphasis is more on packaging rather than what the editorial message will be."[30]

The cover format also dictates that there be space for the magazine nameplate and some cover blurbs. Furstenau alters photographs to fit the cover's demands. "Generally we run our covers from the inside images," said Bob Furstenau of Meredith Corporation, which publishes *Better Homes & Gardens*. "And so you have an image that hasn't been considered as a cover in the first place. You know if you were to shoot it as a cover, you'd shoot with a hole for the type — like an ad. . . I used it (Cromacom) exclusively on the covers — very little inside — but I do on the cover image that will accommodate the logo and the blurbs in a way that makes it a more saleable product," said Furstenau. "I may clone in some background for some reverse type so the type will read stronger. I might move something off to one side to make room for type. Basically it's a consideration of type versus image."[31]

Digitally Manipulated Magazine Covers

How far can magazine editors manipulate magazine cover photos? "By and large people shouldn't do it," said Graydon Carter, editor of *Spy* magazine. "And specifically any magazine that is by nature a full scale news weekly or a monthly feature magazine. I think the only reason *Spy* can get away with it is that it is a satirical magazine." The January 1989 cover of *Spy* featured Dan Quayle in a dunce cap with the Lincoln Memorial statue. It was a combination photo. "There may be a photograph around with Dan Quayle in a dunce cap, but I don't think he's prepared to release them, not at this time," said Carter.[32]

"It was clever and a really good job," said Bob Furstenau of *Spy's* cover. "It's an illustration. When you take it from reality, from what was recorded, to changing it then you are taking a photographic illustration and making it a drawing. You are essentially putting it in a cartoon mode."[33]

Spy also digitized the May 1988 cover using Donald Trump. "We have Donald Trump on our cover wearing a tuxedo — and Donald Trump would never pose for us," said Carter. "So we never asked him. So we dummied that." Carter was a little surprised when some people asked him how *Spy* got

Trump to pose for them. Carter points out that the manipulated covers did not have inside stories."I think it's wrong to do a profile of somebody and then have their face on the cover in another body doing something that they would not normally do. I would say that's deception. In our case, there's not a story completely about them. They're just illustrated."[34]

Bob Furstenau also used people to digitize cover photos in a December 1985 *Better Homes & Garden* cover of his twin daughters and Santa Claus. The photographer did not achieve a photo where both girls and Santa Claus were simultaneously smiling. Meredith Corporation buys the copy right to all the photos that it uses. "It's a picture that we own — it's not news — and we paid $1500 for that Santa Clause to sit there and all we were really interested in was his face and his body. If they didn't happen to jive at the same time, it's not saying that we can't bring them together," said Furstenau. "So I just changed his head. Actually I just changed his face. I put a face in that was smiling.

The June 1988 cover of *Metropolitan Home*, published by Meredith, combined two images because the lighting ratio of an indoor and outdoor scene was impossible to achieve on film, said Furstenau. A recent critique of *Metropolitan Home* that included Furstenau decided that a model's neck should have been extended in a fashion photo. "It's a matter of style and taste about what you are looking at in our magazines," said Furstenau.[35]

Conde Nast Traveler digitized the February 1989 cover at photographer Hiro's suggestions, but the response from the readers was negative according to Diana La Guardia. Hiro's photo was of a woman jumping into water, but the splashes were digitized to create a surrealistic affect. "There's something unsettling about it — that was part of the concept behind it, and I felt a little uncomfortable doing it," said La Guardia. "I'm trying to understand what the sophistication of our readers are out there. Are they going to understand that an art photographer has the liberty to create something that is not real or are they going to think 'My god, what is this magazine going to do?"
La Guardia's concerns came true. "We got a lot of negative responses from that cover," said La Guardia. "Readers wrote in — people from all over — saying 'I know that a woman who's diving into the water can't make a splash like that. How could a photo be so contrived?" Reader reaction was also tied to *Traveler's* editorial philosophy. According to La Guardia, *Traveler* wants to separate itself from its competition by not regurgitating travel brochures. "People wrote in 'I thought you were going

to tell it like it is and I though thought you were not going to lower itself to manipulate photography when you're suppose to be telling it like it is."

"It sort of rang true for me," said La Guardia, "because what I would love to be able to do is to have the right photographers in the right places all around the world getting the right pictures." A *Conde Nast Traveler* October 1988 cover of New York City was digitally manipulated to show airplanes writing "New York" over the Chrysler building. Three separate photos, shot by the same photographer, were used to make the cover: the Chrysler building, the sky writing and the planes. The photo was impossible to shoot naturally because of air regulations and it did not sell well, according to La Guardia, perhaps because "people don't like New York."[36]

A magazine that premiered in January 1989 has combined photos for its covers. The March 1989 cover of *Sports Illustrated for Kids* features one the NBA's shortest basketball players dribbling through the legs of a large player. "We do a lot of that, especially on covers, but it's pretty obvious that they're basically fantasies," said Rocco Alberico, art director for *Sports Illustrated for Kids.* "That's such an obvious fake — kids know people that size really don't exist." Alberico would not manipulate news covers. "I feel strongly about taking something and touting it as reality if it's not reality. I think that's wrong," said Alberico who was the former art director for *Muppet* magazine. "When you're going for some sort of fantasy thing, I think it's fine."[37]

The picture editor for *World,* a children's magazine published by *National Geographic,* has a different viewpoint. "I'm a purist when it comes to electronic manipulation," said Larry Nighswander, who has an extensive newspaper background."I'm concerned the kids won't be able to distinguish it from reality. The kids are going to say, 'Wow, that guy's really small or boy, that guy's really big. It's going to confuse reality." Nighswander says that the only digital retouching at *World* is for technical control of color reproduction.[38]

But Alberico believes kids can distinguish fantasy from reality on the covers. "We've been doing a lot of focus groups with kids in our age group and the kids are pretty hip. The are not mixing up fantasy with reality," said Alberico. "They don't know the technical jargon, but they've seen Star Wars, they've seen all this nutty stuff that goes on in movies. They're pretty savvy so they can tell."38

The Gray Areas of Digital Manipulation

If news photos are not altered substantially and some cover illustrations might combine photos,

where are the gray areas? "I think of all of the people who might handle these (electronic) photographs. I don't think we're talking about a lack of integrity. It's not a black and white issue," said newspaper photographer George Wedding, who is director of photography for the *Sacramento Bee.* "Do I change this? When do I change it? When don't I change it? It's a very gray area."[39] News photos at *Newsday* on Long Island are not touched, said picture editor Donald Norkett to the *San Jose Mercury News.* "But for the cover of the Travel section, he said, if a pleasant scene in Vermont were marred by telephone poles and wires, "we'd remove those."[40]

Would magazine editors remove telephone wires from a scenic? The answers were split:

"I would consider doing it," said Diana La Guardia of *Conde Nast Traveler.*[41]

"That's sort of a gray area," said Rocco Alberico of *Sports Illustrated for Kids.* "I haven't really don't that, but I don't think it's such a heinous crime."[42]

"It depends. In *Life* I'd be extremely reluctant to change what existed in reality. In travel, I'd be reluctant," said Tom Bentkowski of *Life.*[43]

"Anything that interferes with the ultimate esthetic of the picture —spots, telephone wires, people, whatever. That's sort of an automatic," said Bob Furstenau of Meredith Corporation. "But if I was a news photographer or if I was a news art director and I was dealing in reality, then I would put telephone wires in. I would keep it real."[44]

"What if the reader goes to that pretty scenic" asked Larry Nighswander of *World.* "It's not as pretty and the reader asks, how did they do that?"[45]

"The world has telephone poles in it. If you're tying to paint an unrealistic view of the world — and that's your intent — fine, but as a journalist that goes against completely what you're trying to do," said Dave Griffin of *National Geographic.*[46]

"If you can't do it with a crop, they stay in," said Nanette Bisher of *U.S. News & World Report.*[47]

"No! That's changing the photograph. It's changing the landscape. It's altering what's there," said Michele Stephenson of *Time.*[48]

"I think that inalterably destroys the credibility of photography as reliable for seeing and understanding the world," said Tom Kennedy of *National Geographic.* "It calls the credibility of the publication into questions forever more. For me, credibility is our touchstone, so to speak, that's something you don't trifle with."[49]

However, feature photography might be a gray area for some publications. The *Wall Street Journal* quoted *Newsweek*'s Karen Mullarkey as saying that although it's taboo to alter news photos, it's permitted with feature or fashion pictures. *Newsweek* was unable to photograph actors Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise together for a Jan. 16, 1989 story on the movie "Rain Man." So they digitally combined two photos into one image.[50] Audrey Isaac, an assistant to Karen Mullarkey, quoted Mullarkey as saying, "It was a set up shot with their permission." [5]

"I think that would be a wonderful thing because you'd be in partnership with people who were on the cover and they'd know it would be an interesting thing — it's making them part of the game," said Bob Furstenau of Meredith Corporation, which is planning to introduce *Country America* magazine that Furstenau describes as partially" a *People* magazine for country." "It's going to be our first experience with celebrities."[52]

Are celebrity features different from news?*People Weekly* does not splice photos together. "It's not something we do," said M.C. Marden. "We try very hard to be believable. And I think as soon as you start doing that you're less believable. And usually we will try desperately to get it the way we want it rather than to do that kind of work on a picture." Marden said that *People* would have run two photos of Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise. "I really feel strongly about it. I don't like to fool around. I think a picture should be presented as it's shot."[53]

"Some people say 'Oh, with feature pictures it doesn't matter. Well it matters to me," said Michele Stephenson. "It you're putting people into a situation that didn't exist — I have problems with that. You're creating art."[54]

"What is feature?It's just a lighter side of news," said Dave Griffin of *National Geographic*. "Two pictures can run side by side. No! You just don't (combine). There are design solutions to those problems. Nothing is so tight."[55]

Reality vs Illustrations

Magazines' dependence on illustrations are a natural invitation to manipulate and combine photos for graphic appeal. But how far should editors use computer technology?

"I get uncomfortable when I think — my God! — we're not going to know a real photograph from an unreal photograph," said Diana La Guardia of *Conde Nast Traveler*. She would be willing to digitize cover photos, but "I would be reluctant to do it (when) it might look like the real world."[56]

"We take photography much more literally," said Tom Bentkowski of *Life*. "They really are not to be tampered with unless it's so obvious and clear that it's a fantasy or an ad."[57]

But not every one agrees. "Newspapers are tools for journalism. Magazines I think can get away with a little more," said Rocco Alberico of *Sports Illustrated for Kids*. "I mean they can fool around a little bit more than newspapers."[58] "I think we're in a gray area just being a satirical magazine, " said Graydon Carter of *Spy* magazine.[59]

"I think it's up to all of us to try to hold the line because it can blur easily," said Michele Stephenson of *Time*. "I think if the mainstream magazines start to play with that we'll all lose credibility." Stephenson noted that more and more magazines use illustrations. "If you're creating illustrations, it can get easier and easier to do that sort of thing (manipulation). It do think it's going to be difficult."[60]

"If you can't draw the line, at some point you're going to get caught — you're going to get caught in a bad way," said Dave Griffin of *National Geographic*. "So you shouldn't even worry about trying to be caught — you shouldn't put yourself in that situation."[61]

"If those of us who feel that strongly can maintain that. But it is becoming more difficult. And will, said Stephenson. "I can see my editor saying, 'Well they got that picture.' And we say 'that picture didn't actually exist.' Then I might be under pressure and say, 'Well, why didn't we do that?' I would hope there would be such an uproar!"

"Now maybe it will inch in from the feature section and become more and more acceptable to the point where everybody's doing it, but I can't imagine that we can do that and get away with it," said Stephenson.[62]

"In a certain sense I'm concerned that any alteration sort of debases photography as a reliable means of understanding the world and coming to grips with it in a certain way," said Tom Kennedy of *National Geographic*. "The lines between entertainment and journalism grows increasingly blurred. And I'm a purist."[63] "Don't try to change the world to what you think it should be," said Dave Griffin. "Take it or leave it. If you've got a problem with the world and you think you've got to clean it up, then you're in the wrong business."[64]

Conclusions

Magazine editors were unanimous in their refusal to alter news photos; however news editors did not consider that digitally cloning backgrounds to fit a layout or cover was substantial alteration. Feature photos, however, was an area of debate. Editors split in their initial reaction as to whether to remove telephone wires in a scenic feature picture. Editors of the news editorial magazines, who were extremely conservative in altering photographs, were against removing telephone wires in a scenic. Editors of specialized magazines would remove telephone wires for esthetic reasons.

Editors seemed to agree that the editorial formula of a magazine might dictate how far editors could digitally manipulate cover photos; *Conde Nast Traveler* created a realistic illustration of New York City from three separate images; *Spy's* treament of manipulating celebrities differed from the more news–oriented *People'*. However, splicing together feature photos of celebrities, such as actors Hoffman and Cruise by *Newsweek,* still raised eyebrows among many news–oriented editors. Although the editorial philosophy of a magazine might dictate how far a magazine can manipulate photos, many readers still take photographs literally. How do you judge what is "obvious fantasy"? Two children's magazine editors could not agree. Readers of *Conde Nast Traveler* objected to the unrealistic splashes of a woman diver.

Magazine editors need to start thinking globally in their profession. This technology is only going to be used by more and more publications, and there is a diversity of training and background in magazine editing and design. What is at risk is the credibility of all photography and all journalism. Do readers make the distinctions between publications? We cannot be Luddites about new technology, but we must be vigilant about photography's historically honored reputation. Steve Larson of *U.S. News & World Report* said it best:

> "The photo is a record of a moment in time. We're on shaky ground when we start changing that. We must maintain this pact. Catching a moment in time has history. When you look at a Matthew Brady photo there is that sense 'that really happened.' I believe strongly that's where photography derives its power."[65]

Notes

1. See Shiela Reaves, "Digital Retouching: Is There a Place for it in Newspaper Photography? An Examination of the Ethics, *News Photographer*, January 1987, pp. 23-32.

2. James Autry, "The Golden Age of Magazines," *Magazines in Depth*, January 1989, p. 5.

3. Mary W. Quigley, "What Sell, What Bombs: Magazine Cover Roulette," *Washington Journalism Review*, July/August 1988, p. 19.

4. Reaves, ibid.

5. Michael L. Morse, "A Call for Ethical Standards," *The Electronic Revolution in News Photography: A NPPA National Report*, edited by Michael L. Morse, (National Press Photographers Association, 1987), p. 19.

6. Robert Gilka, "The Key is Integrity," Ibid., p.21.

7. David Ansley "What's Wrong with this Picture?" *San Jose Mercury News*, Feb. 7, 1989; Clare Ansberry, "Alterations of Photos Raise Host of Legal, Ethical Issues," *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 26, 1989.

8. Betsy Niesyn, "Photo Manipulation Serves up Ethical Dilemma," *Folio: The Magazine for Magazine Management*, April 1988, p. 31.

9. George Wedding, Ed Canale, Paul Duginski, "Letters: Retouching An Issue," *MacWeek*, Jan. 10, 1989, p. 36.

10. Tom Bentkowski, director of design, *Life*, telephone interview, March 20, 1989.

11. Steve Larson, director of photography, *U.S. News & World Report*, telephone interview, March 14, 1989.

12.Nanette Bisher, senior art director, *U.S. News & World Report*, telephone interview, March 14, 1989.

13. Larson interview.

14. Bentkowski interview.

15. Michele Stephenson, picture editor, *Time*, telephone interview, March 14, 1989.

16. Dave Griffin, layout editor, *National Geographic*, telephone interview, March 14, 1989.

17. Audrey Isaac, assistant to Karen Mullarkey, *Newsweek*, telephone interview, March 21, 1989. Karen Mullarkey, picture editor of *Newsweek*, was unable to answer the phone during the three days before she left for vacation. Her assistant, Audrey Isaac, took the questions and received answers from Ms. Mullarkey.

18. Stephenson interview.

19. ibid.

20. Tom Kennedy, director of photography, *National Geographic,* telephone interview, March 15, 1989

21. Bentkowski interview.

22. Stephenson interview.

23. Bob Furstenau, director of magazine production, Meredith Corporation, to Dialogue '88: Editors and Educators convention sponsored by Meredith Corporation, Des Moines, Iowa, Nov. 2–Nov. 4, 1988.

24. Bob Furstenau, telephone interview, March 16, 1989.

25. Diana La Guardia, art director, *Conde Nast Traveler,* March 15, 1989.

26. Isaac interview.

27. Kennedy interview.

28. Griffin interview.

29. Mary Carroll Marden, picture editor, *People Weekly,* telephone editor, March 21, 1989.

30. La Guardia interview.

31. Furstenau interview.

32. Graydon Carter, editor, *Spy,* telephone interview, March 14, 1989.

33. Furstenau interview.

34. Carter interview.

35. Furstenau interview.

36. La Guardia interview.

37. Rocco Alberico, art director, *Sports Illustrated for Kids,* telephone interview, March 21, 1989.

38. Larry Nighswander, illustrations editor, *World,* telephone interview, March 16, 1989.

39. Ron Mann, "Electronics," *F/10 Forum,* March 1988.

40. Ansley, ibid.

41. La Guardia interview.

42. Alberico interview.

43. Bentkowski interview.

44. Furstenau interview.

45. Nighswander interview.

46. Griffin interview.

47. Bisher interview.

48. Stephenson interview.

49. Kennedy interview.

50. Ansberry, ibid.

51. Isaac interview.

52. Furstenau interview.

53. Marden interview.

54. Stephenson interview.

55. Griffin interview.

56. La Guardia interview.

57. Bentowski interview.

58. Alberico interview.

59. Carter interview.

60. Stephenson interview.

61. Griffin interview.

62. Stephenson interview.

63. Kennedy interview.

64. Griffin interview.

65. Larson interview.